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James Plath

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WGLT Radio

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James Plath, *This Tonic*
as read on Poetry Radio on WGLT in Normal, IL

If you could bottle it, this tonic would sell faster than snake oil
guaranteed to cure mild depression, jaundice, restiveness, malaise,
even hypertension.

It wouldn't need a killer spiel, either,
because it goes down smooth as the best Spanish port.
That is, if you could drink it all in.

It would sell itself, maybe draw bigger crowds than the running of the bulls
with plenty of pushing and jockeying for position.

And the media blitz? Once word gets out, infomercials and Florida-sized billboards
can't compete.

If you could bottle it, faster than a Chia Pet, this tonic would sprout a bright coat of
condos and brand-new cul-de-sacs with a waiting list longer than an outlet mall.
Before you could even say "owner's association," there'd be churches, schools,
convenience stores, playgrounds and Route 66 detour gift shops.
You know the type.
With clever signage, ZepCo fishing pole rentals and plenty of bread for the kids
climbing out of SUVs to toss resident ducks and geese,
one lunker bass lurking just out of sight, praising Jesus.

If you could bottle it, this tonic would sell more people than a great pension plan
with zero loopholes.
It would rank right up there with table massages, antibiotics, paid vacations and
phony sick days.
A sight for eyes sore of soybeans and corn, telephone poles and power lines, those
prairie grids that seem to stretch all the way to the smokestacks that cough near the
shores of Lake Michigan.

But the thing of it is, you can't even see this sweet little pond from I-55, and besides,
I hear the farmer's not selling.

Many thanks to the poet for allowing us to share his work.